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VOLUME 18, NO. 1
WINTER 2010

A BLOSSOM WALK: FIRST BLOOMS OF WINTER

Laurie Meyerpeter
Placer County
Master Gardener

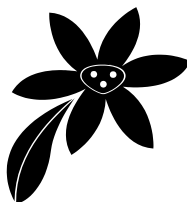
Winter is my favorite season of the year. To me, it's not barren and cold. It's filled with expectancy and hope. Tree branches are bare of leaves but the buds are fat with life.

The hills are green with winter grasses and the first wildflowers begin to appear along the roadsides. Thousands of wintering birds gorge on seeds in pastureland and rice fields; then rise up in noisy masses when disturbed. I love this season.

Although we have a mindset that winter means snowmen, icicles, and hot cocoa, winter in Northern California is actually a rich season for blossoms and color. A gardener just needs to pull on a sweater and warm hat and take a walk out into the garden to see the show.

In the midst of winter, as fierce storms blow across the landscape, Poet's **Narcissus** or Jonquil bulbs (*Narcissus poeticus*) are among the first blooms of the cold season.

The sweetly scented flowers often mark old homestead sites and are a welcome addition to a modern garden as well.



I have some growing by my door and love the way the scent welcomes my homecoming after a day in town.

These are best planted in the fall, but nurseries often have a few packages of bulbs leftover and it is perfectly fine to plant them now.

They'll bloom a little late this year, but be back on their welcoming schedule next year.

If you receive a gift of Paperwhite *Narcissus* (*Narcissus papyraceus*) in a dish (these are a variation of the same bulb), plant these bulbs outside after you've enjoyed their lovely flowers, and they will flourish for years to come.

Other early bulbs include Snowflakes (*Leucojum aestivum*), Snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*), and some early Daffodils (*Narcissus sp.*).

All have blossoms during the winter. Yellow daffodils generally flower earlier than fancy ones.

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THE CURIOUS GARDENER

...A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION AND THE UC MASTER GARDENERS OF PLACER AND NEVADA COUNTIES

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Also in full bloom throughout the season are **camellias**. I love the way that pink camellia blossoms look in swirling fog!



The **Sasanqua Camellias** start in fall and depending on variety, bloom through the winter. "Yuletide" is a favorite late Sasanqua variety that blooms in the midst of winter and has red single blossoms with yellow stamens, set against rich green foliage. It takes considerable sun.

The **Japonica Camellias** begin blooming just about the time the Sasanquas begin to taper off. There are many varieties and gardeners will want cultivars labeled "early" or "midseason" for winter bloom, or go to a nursery on a winter day and pick those varieties that are blossoming at the time desired.

A few winter blooming cultivars include "Alba Plena", "Daikagura", "Debutante", "Elegans", and "Tom Knudsen". Japonica camellias are best grown out of strong sun. All camellias have attractive foliage when not in bloom and look attractive year round.

Another favorite winter bloomer is the **Daphne** (*Daphne odora*) with its legendary fragrance. The most commonly available variety has lovely variegated leaves as well.

This plant prefers some protection from hot sun during the mid-day hours but is not a fussy plant and likes only a moderate amount of water, in well drained soil. Too much pampering may kill it!

Other winter blooming shrubs include the evergreen Springtime **Viburnum** (*Viburnum tinus* 'Springtime' or 'Compacta') which blooms from fall through the winter and has nice looking foliage the rest of the year.

Rosemary is another winter bloomer with vivid blue flowers that attract bees. **Kerria** (*Kerria japonica*) has striking yellow blossoms set upon bare bright green stems in late winter. Gardeners seeking winter blooms will want to seek out the older, single flowered Kerria because it blooms earlier than the more common double flowered Kerria.

Towards the end of the season, almost into spring, are the blossoms of the **Flowering Quince** (*Chaenomeles sp.*). This plant has fat buds that can be brought in the house to bloom as early as January in some places. The buds on garden shrubs will explode into bloom on bare branches in the late winter and are a harbinger that spring is nearly arrived.

Many plants are lacking in blossoms but have vividly colored bark or interesting stems that are visible during the winter.

Red Twig Dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*) and "Coral Bark" **Japanese Maples** (*Acer palamatum* 'Sango Kaku', 'Beni Kawa', 'Fjeillheim', 'Winter Flame', and others), have striking red stems throughout the winter.

And there are many plants with twisty branches that add interest during the season, including Harry Lauder's **Walking Stick** (*Corylus avellana* 'Contorta') and Lavender Twist **Redbud** (*Cercis Canadensis* 'Covey'). These shrubs and trees have been cultivated specifically for their unique winter appearance and

are striking specimen plants in a winter garden.

A trip to the nursery will also reveal winter annuals to brighten flowerbeds and provide colorful accents in pots.

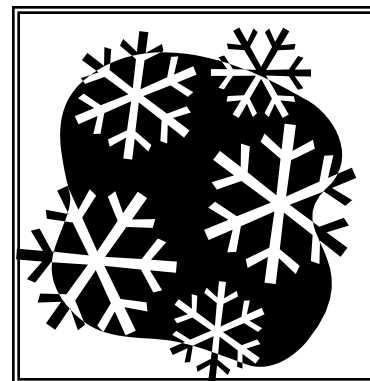
These include calendulas, snapdragons, primrose, poppies, pansies, and violas. This is not a complete list, there are dozens of selections in a prism of colors.

Many of these are quite easy to grow from seed if started in the fall, however germination can be low in cold soils so gardeners are usually advised to start with young plants from the nursery during the winter.

I like to have pots of these colorful annuals to brighten my day as I walk out my front door and glory in my favorite season.

Yes, winter is my favorite season. Open that door, enjoy the crisp cold air on your face, and venture forth on a garden exploration. You too will find dozens of plants blooming during the blustery cold winter days.

Winter may become your favorite season too!



References:

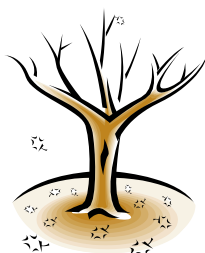
Sunset Western Garden Book.

DORMANT SPRAYING OF FRUIT TREES

Gay Wilhelm
Placer County
Master Gardener

During the winter months, the garden is put to bed. Catalogs of helpful gardening tips and direction, that once were studied daily, pile up as you shift gears and begin planning for the holidays.

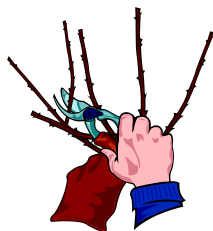
Sitting by the fire with a cup of hot tea, you reminisce of summer warmth and beauty. However, as the holidays begin to pass us, the thought of the dormant season presents itself as you notice the barren branches no longer possessing leaves or flowers.



After the first leaves fall, yet not before the precious plant buds begin to break open in the spring, you recognize this is the best time to manage problems of pests and diseases from the previous season this past year.

After the autumn leaves have presented their colorful show and fallen to the ground, it is time for the trees to begin their long winter nap.

This time is important in removing diseased wood from the trees, fruit and leaves from the ground around the root base of the trees. Any fruit mummies, left on the tree must be removed as well. Leafless trees await your attention and allow you to prune for future success.



Pruning aids in promoting open areas for sunlight and improved air circulation within the branches and canopy of the tree.

Winter is the best time to apply dormant oil sprays for control of pests and to limit infection and the spread of certain diseases.

Dormant oil sprays have a variety of names depending upon the manufacturer or desired outcome of use. These oils, horticultural oil, are also known as insecticidal oil, narrow range oil, supreme oil, superior oil, dormant oil or ultrafine oil can be used in ornamentals, fruit and nut trees.

These oils are used to control soft bodied insects such as aphids, immature white flies, immature scales, psyllids, thrips and some insect eggs as well as mites.

CAUTION- always check the label for targeted pests and directions of use.

Additionally, certain horticultural oils can help control leaf curl, shot hole fungus, powdery mildew and other fungi. Some oils have the ability to kill insects on direct contact.

Thorough application and coverage is essential for successful treatment of problems. Horticulture oils are low in toxicity to wildlife and beneficial insects. Although it should be noted, care must be taken not to swallow, inhale or expose your skin and eyes.

Wear protective gear and long sleeves and long pants when spraying!

Dormant sprays may not be needed every year in a backyard orchard. The previous season will help you decide if the amount of disease and insect damage warrants spraying.

Treat at the beginning of dormancy in late November and again just before the buds begin to open in February or early March. One way to remember when to consider dormant spraying is to do so around Thanksgiving time and Valentine's Day.

Three applications may be necessary depending on the pests and the weather.

Once flower buds begin to open you may damage fruit and kill pollinating bees if spraying is done at this time. Therefore, it is important to spray at the proposed times before "bud break".

Pump sprayers are ideal ways to evenly apply the necessary material. Do not spray drought stressed trees, during rain or during or prior to freezing weather. Oils



should be sprayed within 30 days before or after applications of sulfur or certain other fungicides had been applied to the trees.

Fixed copper fungicides may be used for certain diseases and may take several applications to reap the desired result.

Continued on page 4

A partial listing follows for fruit trees:

- Apple and pear- dormant oil helps control scale, overwintering aphids, mite eggs and pear phyla.
- Apricot- dormant oil helps control scale, mite and aphid eggs and peach tree borer. Never use sulfur on apricots.
- Cherry- is susceptible to oozing from gummosis (Bacterial canker) and may respond to dormant sprays containing fixed copper.
- Peach and nectarine- require repeated applications of fixed copper spray to control peach leaf curl. In December or January, prune off half to two thirds of last season's growth to stimulate new fruiting wood. Spray the ground after removing leaves and branches. Use dormant oil if scale is present.
- Plum and prune- dormant oil helps control scale and overwintering aphid and mite eggs. Apply copper for shot hole fungus. Heavy pruning may be needed to help control tree size. Spray ground after clean up.
- Nut trees- remove any nuts still hanging on the tree. Spray with dormant oil to control scale. Oil sprays also help control peach tree borers and mite eggs.

For more information: <http://homeorchard.ucdavis.edu>

References:

"Winter Pest Management in Backyard Deciduous Fruit Trees" ANR Publication 8368 - July 2009 by Pamela M. Geisel, Academic Coordinator, UC Statewide MG Program and Donna C. Seaver, Program Representative, UC Statewide MG Program.

Ask A Master Gardener: Staking a Newly Planted Tree

Q: I just planted a new tree and want to know the best way to stake it.

A: It's important to know that not all newly planted trees need to be staked. In fact, improper staking can harm rather than help. The more freely a tree can move, the stronger its trunk will become and the more likely it will be to withstand storms.

There are three situations in which staking is necessary: to protect against damage from equipment, vehicles or animals; to anchor trees whose roots cannot support the tree upright in the wind; and to support trunks unable to stand upright by themselves.

Protective stakes only need to be tall enough to be seen and avoided by equipment operators. Three stakes are generally enough and they should not be attached to the tree. Netting or wire fencing can be attached to the stakes to exclude animals.

Anchor stakes should be firmly set in the surrounding soil outside the root ball. Short stakes used for protection can do double duty as anchoring stakes by attaching the lower part of the tree to them with broad, flexible ties. The idea is to restrict root ball movement, while allowing the top of the tree to move in the wind.

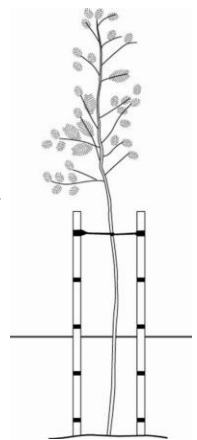
Trees trained properly at the nursery should not need support staking. Most reputable tree growers no longer remove lower branches to create top-heavy, "lollipop" trees. They know that leaving these "nurse branches" on the young tree will help it develop a thicker trunk with healthy taper.

To determine if your newly purchased tree requires support staking, remove the stake that came with the tree from the nursery. If the tree stands upright on its own, you should not stake it.

However if the trunk flops over, place two stakes in the ground outside the root ball on opposite sides of the tree so that prevailing winds will blow through the stakes. Starting about 2 feet above the ground, use two fingers, one on either side, to support the trunk. Move your fingers slowly up the trunk until the tree stands upright. Flexible ties that allow movement should go 6 inches above this point. Cut the stakes 2 to 3 inches above the ties so that the trunk and upper branches will not be damaged by blowing into or rubbing on the stakes. Check the ties regularly to make sure they are not constricting the trunk.

Remove stakes and ties as soon as they are no longer needed.

By Elaine Applebaum, Placer County Master Gardener





BULLETIN BOARD



Sierra College 2011 Community Education Courses

- Basic Landscape Irrigation Repair—February 26, 9am to Noon, Roseville Gateway
- Organic Vegetable Gardening, March 19 and 26, 9am to 1pm, Rocklin Campus
- Growing Citrus in the Foothills, February 26 and March 5, 9am to 1pm, Rocklin Campus
- Build a Greenhouse, March 19, 9am to Noon, Rocklin Campus
- Oak Friendly Landscape, April 2nd, 9am to Noon, Roseville Gateway

Register here: www.sccommed.org

Mark Your Calendars!

Placer Master Gardeners present:
**The 4th Annual
Gardeners Gathering**

Saturday, March 5th
Blue Goose Fruit Shed in
Loomis
9am to 3pm

REMEMBER:

**IT IS TIME TO GET BARE-ROOT FRUIT
TREES!!**

NEVADA COUNTY GROWN
PRESENTS

THE SUSTAINABLE LOCAL FOOD AND FARM CONFERENCE

JANUARY 22ND, 2011
THE GOLD MINER'S INN AND CONFERENCE CENTER

Go to www.nevadacountygrown.org for more information on this event.

A CHILDREN'S GARDEN TO PLAN, PLANT AND PLAY IN

Durinda Kelley
Nevada County
Master Gardener

When I was a young thing, I made ballerina dancing dolls from fuchsia flowers growing on a fence in the back yard of our home in San Francisco.

Then came the delightful days of having stories read to me of "Peter Rabbit in Mr. McGregor's Garden" and "The Secret Garden". Alas, one splendid summer in Tennessee I was permitted to have a corner of Daddy's garden where I *planted anything I wanted*.

Should I have a wish, it would be for all children to have the experience of planning, planting and playing in their own garden.

Taking ownership of a piece of ground and caring for it can be full of life lessons. The engagement of connecting with the environment while nurturing plants and sharing the bounty is a confidence builder. Not to mention "cultivating" a basic foundation and introduction to seeds, bugs, frogs, worms, birds and spiders.

For the experience to be successful and for it to last longer than a week or two, there are some fundamental guidelines which should be noted. No one wants to hear the audible sighs of adults lamenting, "It was a disaster, fruitless, useless and a total failure." So here we go, some general points:

- Place garden a short distance from the residence, near a water source and positioned to receive at least six hours of sun light.
- A fenced in area will certainly help in discouraging the four legged hungry guests.

- Start small, maybe an area of 10' x 10'.

Pretty much the same for an adult garden, wouldn't you say?

Gardeners, even young gardeners, need to plan, so gather seed catalogues, paper and pencil and draw out a plan.

Draw in pathways, location of raised beds, water features, benches and such. Include a gate, table and stools, shade structure, paving stones, teepee and places to sit, lay or stand up-side down.

Keep it simple. Make a table of two planks on a base of four tree stumps and stools made of leveled stumps painted bright colors (perhaps hand prints on the table top).

Pathways made of different colored pavers, round or square, leading from the entrance to the center area of the garden.

A tee-pee made of bamboo spread at the base large enough to become a covered tent with climbing beans (maybe two or three different cultivars).

A water feature can be as small as a medium size children's plastic swimming pool, sunken to a depth even with the soil and surrounded by flat stones.

A shade structure using PVC as the frame, with a height of as much as 5 feet and covered with burlap or shade cloth or vines, positioned

over a piece of carpeting makes a nice nap nest or place to tell stories, read or just watch nature.

Raised beds that are no larger than 4'x 4' are best for little ones and placed so they can work from all sides. Or maybe a garden planting area shaped like a wheel with "spokes" dividing the beds.

Be creative!

Unused lamp shades, painted bright colors, turned up-side down and filled with potting soil make wonderful planters and last for several years.

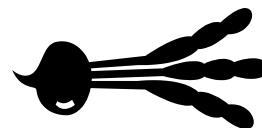
Broken, discarded clay pots and other containers make inviting places for frogs. Stack them and tuck them under large leafed plants.

Planting. Select vegetables and flowers that are fast growers and have more than one use.

As an example, fennel grows fast, takes little maintenance, taste like licorice (especially the seeds) and is a magnet to Lady Beetles.

Nasturtiums are a must with leaves and flowers that can be eaten. These grow abundantly and radiate cheer to the garden with their bright yellow and orange flowers.

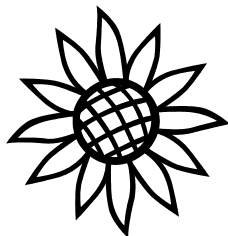
Radishes are up from seed very quickly and teach the children of edibles growing under the soil as well as having them experience the taste of different greens in salads.



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Sunflowers are always a hit, and come in all sizes. The seeds attract birds and flowers bring the honey bees and give a lesson of the turning of the flower's face towards the sun.



Not to be forgotten are cherry tomatoes, chives, parsley, strawberries, peas, stevia, borage, Shasta daisy, calendula, and lemon verbena.

Keeping in mind that the plants chosen will involve all senses, i.e., smell, touch, visual and taste.

Be sure to leave a small area for the compost pile. A small plastic garbage can with a lid and plenty of holes will be sufficient.

Teach early on that the plants pulled at the end of the season along with a hand full of worms makes a beautiful beginning for the next season.

A youth garden should be functional and fun, with an ownership. Create a sign such as "Paul's Plot", or "Jamie's Yummy Garden".

Allow the children the freedom of selecting placement and numbers of plants.

So what if all 25 seeds of sunflowers grow up to challenge the size of Jack's beanstalk? The garden will be a newsworthy article showing off its individual style.

I believe that the memories and lessons learned in planting and tending a garden will be held dear, and surely one day, they will tell their children about floating pea-pod boats in the bird-bath.

References:

"Youth Gardens"

University of Illinois Extension

<http://urbanext.illinois.edu>

California School Garden Network

www.csgn.org

A great gift for all your gardening friends!

This calendar is suitable for climate zones from the Central Valley to the foothills.

This year's award-winning Master Gardener Calendar focuses on Edible Gardening – "Have Your Garden and Eat it Too!"

Not interested in growing your own food?

The information provided in this calendar is appropriate for ornamental gardens as well. Sustainable gardening practices are reinforced. *A Gardener's Companion* provides information for all levels of gardeners.



Where to get the calendar?

Local vendors in Placer, Nevada and El Dorado counties carry the calendar. Check out the link below for a list of vendors or shop from home using the on-line order form.

http://ceplacervevada.ucdavis.edu/Master_Gardener803/2011_Gardeners_Companion_Calendar_-_NOW_AVAILABLE.htm



WINTER 2010 CALENDAR



SATURDAYS, year round, 8 AM – Noon
Foothill Farmers' Market, Courthouse parking lot, Auburn
SATURDAYS, year round, Noon—2 PM
"Master Gardeners & Friends" Radio Talk , KNCO Radio, 830 AM

JANUARY

Saturday, January 22 from 10am-11am at PC Master Gardener Garden (11477 E Ave. Auburn):
Composting 101

Saturday, January 29 from 10am-Noon at NC Master Gardener Garden (1036 W. Main, GV) :
Bare it all—Planting bare-root trees and shrubs

FEBRUARY

Saturday, February 5 from 10am-Noon at NC Master Gardener Garden (1036 W. Main, GV)
All About Container Gardener: Including Trees!

Saturday, February 5 from 10am-11:30am at Roseville Utility Exploration Center:
Composting 101

Sunday, February 6 from 1pm-3pm at the Placer Nature Center in Auburn :
Fruit Tree Pruning

Saturday, February 12 from 10am-Noon at NC Master Gardener Garden (1036 W. Main, GV)
Pruning Trees and Shrubs

Saturday, February 19 from 10am-Noon at NC Master Gardener Garden (1036 W. Main, GV)
Composting Basics

Saturday, February 26 from 10am-Noon at NC Master Gardener Garden (1036 W. Main, GV)
Nature's Attraction: Plants and Insects

Saturday, February 26 from 9am-11am at PC Master Gardener Garden (11477 E Ave. Auburn)
All About Container Gardener: Including Trees!

MARCH

TOO MANY MASTER GARDENER WORKSHOPS TO LIST!

CONTACT MG HOTLINES FOR MARCH WORKSHOPS:

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The Curious Gardener is published quarterly in January, March, June, and September.

Production Information

The **Curious Gardener** is published quarterly by the University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners of Placer and Nevada Counties.

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